

February 27, 2023

2023 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY  
HB0586/SB0782: Environment – On–Farm Composting Facilities – Permit Exemption

COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations  
POSITION: Testimony of Support of House Bill 0586  
BILL ANALYSIS: Requires preference to compost, mulch, and other organic-based soil amendments when purchased by units of State government  
SIGNED: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FRSC)

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record **in SUPPORT of H.B. 0586**. I am submitting this letter on behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC) on behalf of the Council and does not necessarily represent the views of the State of Maryland. The FSRC was established by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise to work toward a common goal of a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19. One of the key mandates of this council was to develop equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the Maryland food system.

The FSRC believes this legislation will advance several of our priority goals, including:

- **Reducing food waste, increasing recycling, and encouraging other relevant environmental impacts, such as the use of organic inputs to build soil health and increase the sustainability of our food system**

This legislation establishes that when each unit of state government is purchasing compost, mulch, or other soil amendment, there will be a preference for products produced from municipal solid waste, food waste, sludge, yard waste, clean wood waste, or other recycled organic materials provided that the products are competitively priced and of satisfactory quality. The proposed legislation in H.B.0586/S.B.0782 align with the recommendations in the 2021 and 2022 FSRC reports, which details the importance of reducing food waste and expanding composting to build the long-term resilience and sustainability of our local food system and increase organic soil amendments to increase the sustainability of our agricultural systems. Passing H.B.0586/S.B.0782 will strengthen the sustainability of our local food system by encouraging the production and use of composting, mulch, and organic soil amendments facilities, thereby, reducing food waste, enhancing the resiliency of our food systems and our soil health, and contributing to a more sustainable and circular food system within the state of Maryland.

This new legislation would also help support the Solid Waste Management – Organics Recycling and Waste Division – Food Residuals, Chapter 439 (law) passed by the Maryland General Assembly (H.B.264) during the 2021 legislative session by creating a market for food waste composting sites, and thereby, could provide the incentives needed to increase number of food waste composting facilities in Maryland.

In September 2015, US The USEPA and USDA announced a national goal to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. To divert this food waste from reaching landfills, there must be adequate facilities in Maryland that accept food waste for composting. Currently in Maryland, there is composting of food scraps (15.5%)

and yard trimmings (84%), but there are only 20 composting facilities covered under Maryland's composting permits, and only five of the proposed operations include the composting of food scraps, %), according to the Maryland Department of Environment. H.B.0586 would allow food waste, yard waste, and other organic-based composting and soil amendment production processing facilities to grow in Maryland, which is desperately needed to reach our goal of 50% food waste reduction by 2030.

The Maryland Department of Environment has stated that compostable materials comprise the largest portion of waste generated (33.7%), with food waste scraps, specifically, being 21.6% of Maryland's total waste generated or 54.1% of the compostable material. Instead of going to landfills, by increasing organic-based soil amendments and composting, the following benefits could be achieved: 1) reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, 2) extension of landfill/incinerator capacity, 3) production of soil conditioner that partially replaces the need for chemical fertilizers, 4) reduction of need for irrigation, 5), creation of jobs, and 6) improvement of water and air quality.

On behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC), I would like to record SUPPORT of H.B. 0586.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Wilson  
Chair, Communications and Coordination Committee